

Message Text

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FM AMEMBASSY TANANARIVE

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NASA HQS WASHDC PRIORITY

C O N F I D E N T I A L SECTION 1 OF 2 TANANARIVE 1404

E.O. 11652: GDS

TAGS: PFOR, NASA, MA, US

SUBJECT: NASA CLOSURE: STEPS TO SUPPLEMENT U.S. NOTE OF AUGUST 7

REF: A. TANANARIVE 1225; B. TANANARIVE 1323

SUMMARY: THIS MESSAGE PROVIDES EMBASSY SUGGESTIONS FOR DEALING WITH PROBLEMS ARISING FROM NASA STATION CLOSURE. END SUMMARY.

1. EMBASSY BELIEVES IT COULD BE USEFUL TO TAKE SOME ADDITIONAL STEPS VIS-A-VIS GOMR CONCERNING NASA EQUIPMENT RECOVERY BEFORE GOMR REPLY IS RECEIVED TO U.S. NOTE DELIVERED AUGUST 7. MALAGASY ARE APT TO VIEW U.S. PATIENCE AND RESTRAINT TO DATE AS WEAKNESS. THIS PERCEPTION WHEN COUPLED WITH THEIR PROBABLE OVERESTIMATE OF VALUE OF EQUIPMENT NASA WISHES TO RECOVER, MAY WELL LEAD TO CONTINUATION OF UNREASONABLE MALAGASY DEMANDS. THE STEPS EMBASSY IS PROPOSING, HOWEVER, EVEN IF GOMR ATTITUDE IS MORE POSITIVE THAN EXPECTED, ARE NOT SEEN TO BE OF SUCH MAGNITUDE THAT THEY WOULD PRECLUDE A FAVORABLE RESPONSE, BUT THEY ARE DESIGNED TO CREATE SOME GOMR DOUBTS ON U.S. "WEAKNESS."

2. THE EMBASSY'S PLEDGE ON PUBLIC SILENCE CONCERNING CONFIDENTIAL

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NASA OF JULY 14 (REFTEL A) WAS, OF COURSE, BASED ON TWO CONDITIONS: (1) IF GOMR WOULD NOT MAKE FUTURE CONTENTIONS STATEMENTS THEN THERE WOULD BE NO DETAILED RESPONSE TO WHAT GOMR HAD SAID AS OF MORNING OF JULY 14, I.E.,

"UNTIL NOW"; (2) GOMR WOULD PERMIT EVACUATION OF NASA EQUIPMENT. NEITHER OF THESE CONDITIONS HAVE BEEN MET BY GOMR, (SEE REFTEL B)

3. EMBASSY PROPOSES THAT STATEMENT IN PARA 4 BELOW BE PUBLISHED IN WEEKLY USIS BULLETIN "TEMPO." DOING SO SERVES TWO PURPOSES: (1) DEMONSTRATE U.S. SELF-CONFIDENCE VIS-A-VIS GOMR BY SPEAKING OUT, AND (2) WOULD CLARIFY U.S. POSITION FOR MALAGASY PUBLIC. EVEN MALAGASY FAVORABLY DISPOSED TO U.S. WHO ARE PREPARED TO BELIEVE THAT NO BAD FAITH BY USG INVOLVED IN PROBLEM ARE BECOMING PUZZLED BY U.S. SILENCE. STATEMENT PURPOSELY AVOIDS DISCUSSION OF PRESENT SITUATION CONCERNING TROOPS ON STATION, NO ACCESS, AND EQUIPMENT PROBLEM, BUT GOMR MAY ANTICIPATE THIS AS POSSIBLE NEXT STEP ON OUR PART. MALAGASY AND FOREIGNERS HERE ARE LARGELY UNAWARE THIS SITUATION BECAUSE THEY BELIEVE THAT ACCESS WAS BLOCKED JULY 12 THROUGH JULY 14 ONLY. EVEN ALERT SENIOR LOCAL EMPLOYEE OF EMBASSY THOUGHT THIS WAS CASE UNTIL YESTERDAY WHEN WE TOLD HER OTHERWISE. IN PRIVATE CONVERSATION WITH MALAGASY AND FOREIGNERS THEY ARE DISMAYED BY GOMR TACTICS WHEN APPRAISED OF PRESENT SITUATION IN GENERAL TERMS. EMBASSY EXPECTS THAT GOMR REALIZES THIS AND HAS THEREFORE AVOIDED PUBLICITY. SECOND PURPOSE, HOWEVER, IS TRULY SECONDARY SINCE EMBASSY DOES NOT PUT GREAT WEIGHT ON UTILITY OF PUBLIC OPINION UNDER PRESENT CIRCUMSTANCES HERE.

4. TITLE: THE NASA STATION ISSUE

QUOTE: IN RESPONSE TO NUMEROUS QUESTIONS POSED TO THE EMBASSY OF THE UNITED STATES IN TANANARIVE BY MALAGASY FRIENDS AND MEMBERS OF THE PRESS, THE EMBASSY WOULD LIKE TO PROVIDE ANSWERS TO THE THREE QUESTIONS ASKED MOST FREQUENTLY CONCERNING THE CLOSURE OF THE NASA STATION IN MADAGASCAR.

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1. WHAT IS THE POSITION OF THE UNITED STATES GOVERNMENT ON THE NASA STATION RENT ISSUE?

- THE AGREEMENT CONCLUDED BETWEEN THE MALAGASY GOVERNMENT AND THE UNITED STATES GOVERNMENT IN 1963 DID NOT MAKE ANY PROVISION FOR ANY AMOUNT OF RENT. THE AGREEMENT WAS THE SAME IN THIS AND OTHER RESPECTS AS NINE OTHER AGREEMENTS NASA HAS WITH NINE OTHER COUNTRIES WHERE NASA TRACKING STATIONS ARE LOCATED. THE RENEWAL AGREEMENT MADE IN 1967 AND 1970 DID NOT CHANGE THE ORIGINAL AGREEMENT IN TERMS OF ADDING RENTAL PAYMENTS.

2. IS IT NOT UNUSUAL THAT NO RENTAL PAYMENT BE

MADE WHEN A GOVERNMENT HAS AN INSTALLATION IN ANOTHER COUNTRY?

- IT IS NOT UNUSUAL WHEN THE PRESENCE OF THE FACILITY BENEFITS BOTH COUNTRIES. FIRST, THE NASA TRACKING STATIONS EVERYWHERE, INCLUDING MADAGASCAR, SHARE THE DATA THEY COLLECT WITH THE WORLD SCIENTIFIC COMMUNITY. SECONDLY, THE TRACKING STATIONS HAVE MADE A SUBSTANTIAL ECONOMIC CONTRIBUTION TO THE ECONOMIES OF THEIR HOST COUNTRY IN TERMS OF EMPLOYMENT, RENTAL OF TELECOMMUNICATIONS FACILITIES, AND USE OF LOCAL CONTRACT SERVICES. BY 1975 THESE BENEFITS PAID BY NASA IN MADAGASCAR REACHED \$2 MILLION PER YEAR. ON THIS BASIS THE COUNTRIES WHERE THE NASA STATIONS ARE LOCATED HAVE ACCEPTED THEIR PRESENCE WITHOUT PAYMENT OF RENT TO THE GOVERNMENT OF THE HOST COUNTRY. THIS WAS ALSO TRUE IN MADAGASCAR UNTIL 1973.

3. WHAT HAPPEND IN 1973? DID NOT THE 1970 RENEWAL OF 1963 AGREEMENT EXPIRE IN 1973?

- THE RENEWALS OF THE 1963 AGREEMENT WERE FOR THREE YEAR PERIODS AND THE 1970 RENEWAL EXPIRED IN 1973. NEGOTIATIONS FOR A NEW AGREEMENT BEGAN IN 1973, AND AT THAT TIME THE MALAGASY GOVERNMENT REQUESTED THAT THE UNITED STATES GOVERNMENT PAY RENTAL FOR THE STATION UNDER THE TERMS OF THE NEW AGREEMENT AND ALSO PAY LARGE BACK RENTAL PAYMENTS TO 1963. THE UNITED STATES GOVERN-
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MENT TOOK THE POSITION THAT THE ORIGINAL AGREEMENT DID NOT PROVIDE FOR THE PAYMENT OF ANY SPECIFIC AMOUNT OF RENT TO THE HOST GOVERNMENT (AS EXPLAINED ABOVE UNDER THE FIRST TWO QUESTIONS) AND THAT A HIGH FUTURE RENTAL PAYMENT WOULD FORCE NASA TO CLOSE THE STATION AND TO USE ALTERNATE, LESS EXPENSIVE FACILITIES. WHILE THE NEGOTIATIONS WERE IN PROGRESS THE STATION CONTINUED TO OPERATE. THEN IN NOVEMBER 1974 THE NEGOTIATORS OF BOTH GOVERNMENTS AGREED IN PRINCIPLE THAT PAYMENTS WOULD BE MADE, BUT THAT THE UNITED STATES GOVERNMENT WOULD PAY A MODERATE ANNUAL RENT BEGINNING IN JANUARY 1974 WITHIN THE FRAMEWORK OF A NEW BILATERAL AGREEMENT FOR CONTINUED OPERATION OF THE STATION THROUGH DECEMBER 1976. THIS WOULD HAVE BEEN THE FIRST PAYMENT OF ACTUAL RENT BY NASA TO ANY FOREIGN GOVERNMENT FOR THE USE OF GOVERNMENT-OWNED LAND FOR SCIENTIFIC ACTIVITIES. BEFORE FINAL ARRANGEMENTS COULD BE CONCLUDED THE EVENTS OF JANUARY AND FEBRUARY 1975 IN MADAGASCAR INTERVENED AND THE NEW DRAFT AGREEMENT WAS NOT SIGNED. END QUOTE

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5. PUBLISHING STATEMENT RUNS RISK IT MAY ANGER GOMR AND PRODUCE MORE NEGATIVE REACTION TO U.S. NOTE; NOT PUBLISHING RUNS RISK THAT GOMR PERCEPTION OF U.S. WEAKNESS MAY LEAD TO NEGATIVE GOMR DECISION ON NASA EQUIPMENT REMOVAL THAT WOULD BE DIFFICULT TO REVERSE ONCE ENDORSED BY SUPREME REVOLUTIONARY COUNCIL AND RATSIRAKA.

6. IN ADDITION TO STATEMENT, EMBASSY THINKS IT WOULD BE USEFUL TO SAY TO MINISTER OF FOREIGN AFFAIRS AND MINISTER OF ECONOMY AND FINANCE FOLLOWING:

"THE UNITED STATES GOVERNMENT HAS BEEN VERY PATIENT WITH GOMR ON NASA ISSUE. I WOULD URGE GOMR TO CAREFULLY CONSIDER OFFER MADE IN THE U.S. NOTE OF AUGUST 7." CHARGE PLANS TO SEE MINISTERS ON OTHER BUSINESS AND COULD MAKE COMMENT TO THIS EFFECT AT THAT TIME.

7. DEPARTMENT'S COMMENTS REQUESTED. EMBASSY EXPECTS GOMR WILL REQUIRE SEVERAL DAYS TO DEVELOP REPLY TO U.S. NOTE. EMBASSY UNCERTAIN OF CERTAIN FACTS IN STATEMENT SUCH AS NUMBER OF OTHER NASA STATION IN FOREIGN COUNTRIES. IT WOULD ALSO BE USEFUL TO HAVE INSTRUCTIONS FOR IMMEDIATE VERBAL DEMARCHE IN EVENT OF NEGATIVE GOMR RESPONSE TO U.S. NOTE, ESPECIALLY U.S. LEGAL POSITION
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ON EXPROPRIATION OF USG PROPERTY BASED ON RELATED CASE REFERENCES. SUCH AN IMMEDIATE VERBAL REPLY, IF NEEDED, WOULD BE MORE EFFECTIVE WITH GOMR THAT NOTE SOMETIME LATER.
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